

WORKSHOP PLANNING

to reach your objectives

The First Steps

Before you start to plan the content of a workshop, confirm why the session is to be held. If you are running the workshop on behalf of someone else, check what the primary objective is. Where do the participants need to be at the end of the session? What should they have agreed or learned?

Once you know the ultimate aim of the session, you can decide who needs to attend. Getting the right people in the room is very important for a successful outcome. It's always useful to know as much as you can about your audience and why people will be attending the workshop. This knowledge can help you plan the level of detail needed or specific methods to ensure the message gets across. You may also want to consider using an independent facilitator (see *Effective Facilitation*) or request support from business or technical experts.

Decide, in general terms, what topics will be covered and in what order. Then work out the process necessary to reach the desired outcomes.



Practicalities to Consider

Timing

The timing of a workshop session is critical. Where possible, you need to make sure that it does not clash with other events for the prospective attendees. If the session is to be one of sequence of several workshops, you need to schedule them all at the beginning to ensure continuity. The actual duration of the session also has to be considered and carefully planned. Approach and content for a two-hour workshop is very different from one continuing over two days.

Venue

The venue chosen for a workshop can be your biggest asset or a bit of a nightmare. Always check out the room that you intend to use. Make sure that you have sufficient space, controllable temperature, suitable lighting, walls or screens for displays and break out rooms (if needed). A quiet location away from everyday distractions is usually best. If the venue works, no-one will notice; if it's uncomfortable, too hot or noisy, people tend to get distracted and lose focus.

If possible, organise seating and tables in the layout that suits your needs. And if you have been able to research your attendees beforehand, maybe even prepare a seating plan to optimise the group dynamics.

Logistics

Make sure that you know where emergency exits are and details of the fire evacuation procedure. The venue's policy on smoking and the location of toilet facilities will also need to be shared with your delegates.

Arrange for suitable refreshments to be provided. Tea and coffee at break times, as well as a light lunch if the workshop is scheduled for a whole day. Bottles of water and some sweets on the table during the session will also be appreciated.

Send out joining instructions in good time, giving directions to the venue, an outline agenda, information regarding provision of refreshments, dress code and so on.



The Workshop Plan

"It is easier to be flexible about the content of a workshop in the moment if it has been 'comprehensively' planned rather than if it is just a vague outline." Sally Palethorpe, Managing Partner, Inspired Partners

To organise the details of your workshop plan, it's a good idea to use a template similar to the one shown here.

Capture the objectives in clear, concise language and refer back to them while you decide how long to spend on which topic. Work back from what needs to be accomplished in the workshop and check all content is relevant and outcome based.

Information about the location, session duration, the attendees and how you're going to set up the room can also be recorded.

Give each section a title and work out the time slots, including refreshment breaks and some 'stretch and wow'! Decide who will deliver or lead each section, and include some notes about what that section will achieve and the technique for delivery.

Finally, think about the supporting materials needed for each section – prepared flip charts, post-its, pens, presentation slides, wall displays, handouts etc.

Inspired Partners Workshop

Objectives:

- To share knowledge and experience
- To build on relationships with potential clients

Date - Location - Duration:

17 April 2010 at The Abbey Hotel, Malvern
Half day (4 hours)

Attendees:

To be confirmed...

Room Set-up:

Cabaret style

| Time | Section | Who | Content | Support/materials |
|-------|--------------------|-----|--|-------------------|
| 8.30 | Introduction | SP | Welcome delegates and introduce Inspired Partners share objectives and agenda for the day | Pre-written flips |
| 9.30 | The Economic Cycle | JJ | Share the economic curve and lead discussion – get delegates to capture personal experiences | Post-its and pens |
| 10.30 | Refreshment break | | | |
| 11.30 | Case Studies | SP | and so on... | |

Additional Notes:
need to type up post-it notes feedback for future use

Remember...

- To start by setting the context
- Agree ground rules for the session
- Set up an area for recording open issues, questions etc (so that people know their points won't be forgotten – these can then be dealt with later)
- To cover all different learning styles and mix information processing with information sharing
- Add some 'stretch and wow' – ice breakers, energizers – but be sure they are appropriate to the occasion

To Finish

- Allow time at the end of the session to draw to a proper conclusion
- Review outcomes against the session objectives
- Confirm each action, checking understanding of the detail, agreeing owners and dates for completion
- Review the record of remaining open issues and confirm how these will be dealt with
- Share the next steps with attendees
- Get everyone to share one positive point about the workshop and one improvement point
 - Very useful feedback for preparing future sessions!

